

SOMETHING BORROWED: extract

It was typical. The Doctor promised me champagne and cake, and instead I got flying lizards.

‘*Pterodactylus antiquus*, to be precise,’ he told me, ducking as one of the creatures in question swooped low over his head. It was such a close call that the rush of air ruffled the springy curls of his hair. ‘Or perhaps *Pterodactylus extra-smallus* would be a better name, since I don’t recall them being quite so pocket-sized during my last Late Jurassic trip.’

That wasn’t how I would have described them, but maybe it depended on the size of your pockets. These beasts were about as big as pigeons, and the only upside so far was that they seemed to be leaving *us* alone. I couldn’t say the same for the terrified pedestrians around us, though. We’d only arrived on Koturia minutes ago, leaving the TARDIS in a small alley tucked between two obnoxiously coloured buildings on a busy street. We’d heard the screams as soon as we stepped out of the door and had been met with pretty much the last scene that came to mind when I thought of weddings. Bachelor parties? Perhaps. Weddings? Definitely not.

‘Maybe they’re babies,’ I said, cringing against a hot-pink building decorated with silvery lattice-work. I was trying to keep out of the way, both of the pterodactyls and of the panicked people heedlessly shoving others aside in an effort to escape. The creatures were homing in specifically on the Koturians, attacking them with sharp claws and beaks that drew blood and tore skin with each strike. Across the street, I saw several of the pterodactyls gang up on a woman and actually try to carry her away. She was saved at the last moment when a hysterical man accidentally ran into her, disrupting the attack.

‘I don’t think so.’ The Doctor was annoyingly calm, oblivious to the frenzy

around him as he squinted up at the winged menaces. ‘These are some kind of specially modified breed, nothing natural. You can tell by that gold sheen on their wing membrane. No earthly pterodactyl had that. Can’t you see it?’

Mostly all I could see was that it would be very easy for those talons to turn on us at any moment.

Small lines of thought appeared on the Doctor’s forehead. ‘This isn’t the first time I’ve seen something like this,’ he murmured.

He didn’t elaborate, as per his way, and I wasn’t really in the mood to play our usual game of Twenty Questions. The fear around us was so all-consuming that it had an almost tangible quality, and the only thing I knew for sure was that we had to do something to end it. ‘How do we stop them?’ I asked.

For a moment, I didn’t think he’d heard me, but he finally dragged his gaze from the creatures and did a quick, sharp assessment of the rest of our surroundings. His eyes travelled up the side of the pink and silver building, and he gave a decisive nod. ‘There. You need to climb up to that sign.’

I looked. There, right on the edge of the roof, was a flashing sign that was brilliant even in the light of midday. Swirls of blue and green, a bit like a lava lamp, pulsed underneath its iridescent surface while dark-purple messages scrolled across it.

‘That’s two storeys up!’ I exclaimed. ‘And I’m in heels.’

‘Well then, you should have worn more sensible shoes, shouldn’t you? Really, Peri, don’t blame me for your oversights. The footholds are too small for me to do it myself. Now hurry!’